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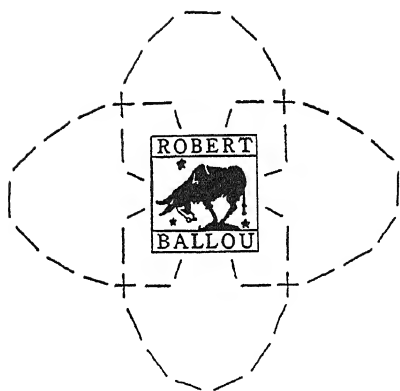
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REBELLION

SYNCRONIZING SAXOPHONES





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# SYNCHOPATING SAXOPHONES

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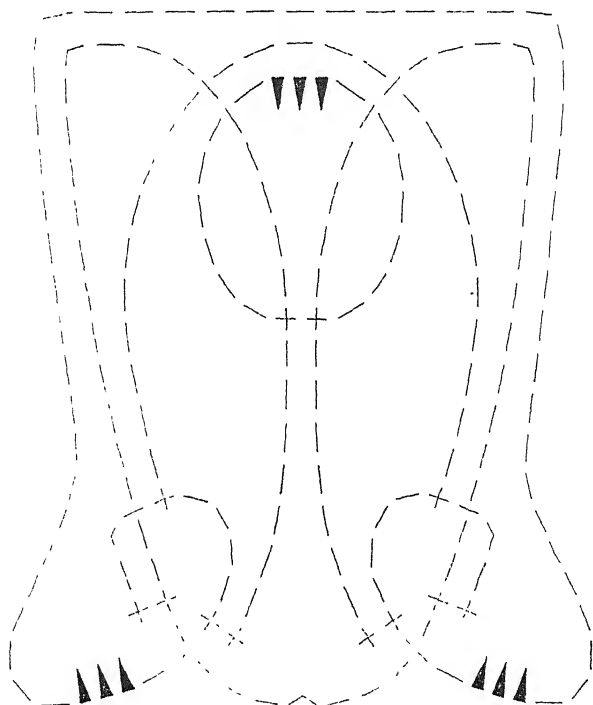
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BY

ALFRED V. FRANKENSTEIN

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CHICAGO, ROBERT O. BALLOU, 1925

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*To the memory of Joseph Schreurs, for thirty  
years first clarinetist of the Chicago Symphony  
Orchestra, my first real teacher, and the man who  
opened my eyes to what music really is.*  
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## INTRODUCTION

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**I**N THE beginning is the fact. After the fact come the theorists who explain that fact. The theory crystallizes into a law, and its expositors constitute themselves a court, demanding observance of that law. This is art.

Meanwhile, there have come into being new facts. And they go over the process again, always well behind the fact and its application; likewise there is the same insistence on the observance of the law. This, again, is art.

"Something is happening in music," said Alexander Russell, and the five words mean much. This "something" especially touches our American musical art. It is the spirit of today, of us. It is jazz. Who knows about it? That man who is its high priest or its day laborer, as you like: it's the same thing. It is the fact about which our theorists have no theory; the musical lawyers, therefore, also wait.

Only he who has squirted its mellifluous subtleties from a "wa-wa" muted trumpet, or a gurgling "sax," or sneaky tuba can tell you the truth—and he rarely looks upon his feat as other than a part of the day's ritual. Once in a while he has the

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gift of interpretation. When he says thus-and-so of the bass clarinet, it is not that tone color of exquisite quality, or a bored stick of wood with a temperamental reed of bamboo to be dandled like a babe with the colic which he recalls: it is an art of making beauty, the mechanics so mastered as to be unconscious, the experience of "giving and taking" and of instant virtuosity become instinct.

"Syncopating Saxophones" blossomed from the soil. Day after day, have I looked across the tops of the six dozen music stands of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, and there seen its author responsive and responsible, one eye on the printed page, the other eye on the conductor, and fingers busy on the bass clarinet's silvered keys.

By night your dancing, eating pleasure seekers have seen him in a small group, a unit among players just as expert, just as fervent in the practice of another art, an art, by the way, as exacting as that of his day time occupation.

Hence, when Brother Frankenstein says "The jazz orchestra of today is a perfect thing, as perfect in its field as a large symphony orchestra—" he is not talking from the point of view of a man who has done a little singing, and a little piano playing, a little concert going and a little dancing

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in cabarets. He has worked in both ensembles. He has read everything printed by the bigwigs of the western world. He has played the works of the French "Six," whose debt to American "ragtime" in its Paris invasion of two decades ago sometime will be comprehended and explained. He has seen and talked with the Russian Stravinski in the workshop of actual symphony orchestra rehearsal.

He is the doer who is become vocal.

*Eric Delamarter*

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## PREFACE

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THERE may be some mental comment on the part of the reader concerning my spelling of Russian names. The orthography I use is that worked out by Carl Van Vechten for his edition of Rimski-Korsakov's autobiography, with certain modifications of my own. It is the natural and logical way to spell Russian names in English, but to go into elaborate explanations of the reason for its existence is out of place here.

Thanks are due to the editor of *Pearson's Magazine* for permission to reprint "Igor Stravinski, Musician of the Machine Age," and to the editor of *The Etude* for the use of "The Musical Babel."

The opinions expressed in these pages are subject to change without notice.

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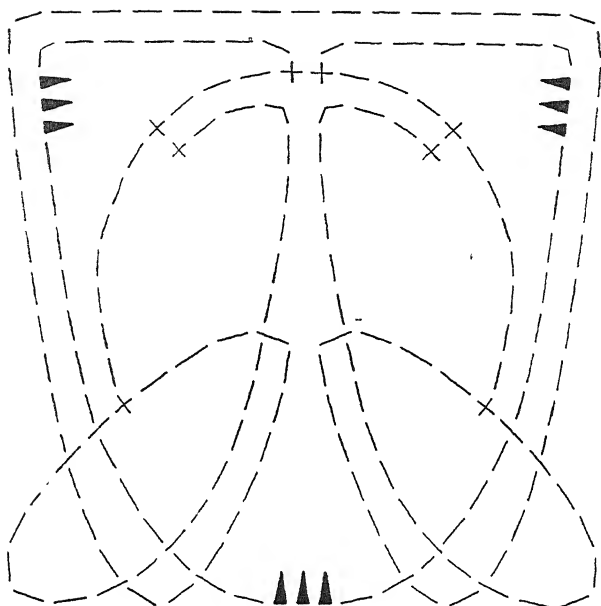
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*Igor Stravinski. From a sketch by Picasso,  
reproduced by courtesy of the Musical Courier.*

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## IGOR STRAVINSKI, MUSICIAN OF THE MACHINE AGE

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**I**F ONE may compare composers to the instruments they exploit Igor Stravinski is a trombone. The Russian has all the instrument's sonority, nobility, and vigor; he has the horn-like grace of which the trombone is capable when

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properly understood by composer and performer, and he has all the unrefined humor of a downward "jackass slide" *fortissimo*.

Stravinski came to Chicago to direct a program of his own work. He appeared on the regular concert series of the Chicago Symphony orchestra, which concerts, as all the world knows, are given on Friday afternoons and Saturday nights. So, at the final rehearsal on Thursday, the pit of Orchestra Hall was fairly filled with those who came more to see than to hear.

Stravinski, short, rather bald, nervous in manner, opened his rehearsal by taking off his coat and revealing the Sweater. I doubt that any interview or other closeup of the composer during his stay in America failed to mention this Sweater. It is orange according to some, but to me it appeared pink. We are all agreed that the trimmings are gray.

He directed in four languages at once, making remarks to the orchestra in general in German, but giving rehearsal marks in English (thus: "noch einmal number sixty-one, please"), speaking Russian to the concertmaster, Gordon, and French to the harpist, Tramonti.

The "Fire Bird" suite was the first thing up. The short man in pink turns giant as soon as he

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starts to work with his baton. He directs with both arms, he directs with a sway of his entire body, he directs even with his knees. At the climax of the suite and of the ballet, the music accompanying the disappearance of the castle of the demon Katchei the Deathless, Stravinski jumps a foot into the air. And yet there is no difficulty, no obscurity in his conducting. It is as clear as the suave, composed beat of Frederick Stock. But where the spectacle of Stock taking a standing high jump in conducting the "Fire Bird" suite would be ridiculous, when Stravinski does it it is thrilling, it is necessary, it is interpretative.

At the concerts he is more restrained. He does not direct with his knees and his shoulders, and he does not jump into the air. The black pall of formal dress clothing covers the muscular back that the Sweater allowed one to see.

The program Stravinski directed is a cross section of his work ranging as it did from the early "Fantastic Scherzo," written when the composer had not yet broken away from the traditions of his teacher, Rimski-Korsakov, through the "Fire Bird" music to the highly advanced "Song of the Nightingale" and the arrangement of what the program called "The Song of the Volga Barge-

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men." The last named opened the show. It is a short, tremendously powerful setting of the familiar tune for wind and percussion instruments. Stravinski intended this arrangement to become the national anthem of the new Russia. In this he falls into the same pitfall as did Grechaninov with his "Hymn of Free Russia." For no matter how appropriate either song may be, the song that carries a people through revolution and subsequent civil war will become the national anthem of that people once the revolution is consummated, and no carefully concocted national song can dislodge it.

The "Fantastic Scherzo" is more scherzo than fantastic. It tries to describe in tone the life of a beehive, and fails entirely to do so. And there is in it entirely too much suggestion of the scherzo "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," by Paul Dukas.

"The Song of the Nightingale" is a masterpiece of the man's fully ripened genius. It was originally composed as a three-act opera taking thirty minutes to perform. But opera to Stravinski was too artificial a form, so he revised the work as a symphonic poem. It would make a great ballet, and is the only one of the composer's major works that is not a ballet.

The story is familiar to all those who have read

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Hans Andersen. It is concerned with the emperor of China and his pet nightingale who leaves him when a mechanical song bird arrives at the court. The emperor is taken sick, the mechanical nightingale is broken and can not sing, but the living bird arrives on the scene to charm Death and save the emperor's life.

The music of this is indescribable as yet in words. For Stravinski has worked out a new idiom, and not until we have all become soaked in it can we find the correct adjective, the apt analogy, that will illumine in other minds what we feel.

The learned critic, Daniel Gregory Mason, complains of the shortness and insignificance of Stravinski's melodic material. This sounds strangely like what the learned critics had to say about Beethoven, Wagner, Musorgski, Debussy—in fact about every composer who has created his own idiom. To those of us who are not so learned that we can still listen to music and not to diminished-seventh chords and resolutions and such things it seems that "The Song of the Nightingale" and other big Stravinski works are packed, crowded, loaded down with melody. In fact it is the very superabundance of melody that calls forth criticisms like those of Dr. Mason.

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The "Fire Bird" music ended the program. And "The Fire Bird" is Rimski-Korsakov on every page. The melodic lines of the last movement of the suite, for example, take inspiration from the mind that conceived the popular "Hymn to the Sun" from *The Golden Cockerel*.

Some nights after the symphony concerts that he directed Stravinski gave a recital at the Arts Club. They imported a lady named Torpadie, Greta Torpadie, from somewhere expressly for this concert, and that was a great waste of somebody's money.

The program itself was a curious mixture of the best and the worst in the composer. It was a queer jumble of sublimity and trash, like a shovel-ful of sapphires and slime.

It opened with the lovely prelude and fisherman's song from the operatic version of *The Nightingale*. The prelude is a mysterious, marching, piece of music, something like the effect used by Reinhold Gliere to describe the journey of the Magi in a little Christmas song. The fisherman's song is a melody of Schubertian sweetness, but cast in a Russian mold.

Some of the following songs were worth hearing. Sometimes Stravinski writes drawing-room stuff of the worst order, like the interminable,

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stupid, inane "Faun and Shepherdess" that closed the program, the banality of which is revealed by the title.

But in some of the better songs is a cryptic tendency. The texts are cryptically senseless, the music cryptically brief. Stravinski has written a song entirely on the syllables "ah" and "oo." And here is a synopsis of the text of a group of four songs for soprano and small orchestra, known as "Pribouatki," as translated and condensed by John Alden Carpenter. (These were not done that night at the Arts Club.)

1. "Uncle Armand—In which Uncle Armand is urged to cheer up and refrain from worry and proceed as quickly as possible to the Inn of the White Horse, where good wine awaits."
2. "The Oven—In which Louise is admonished to watch her oven where the duck sizzles in the casserole."
3. "The Colonel—In which we learn of the sad failure of the Colonel as a huntsman, of the breaking of his gun, the loss of his dog, the escape of the partridge, and the harsh words of his wife."
4. "The Old Man and the Hare—A cryptic little study of antithesis, concerning an old man who cooks soup without fire, who urges the lame

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to walk, and the dumb to speak more softly."

One can not be certain whether such texts mean anything or not.

The biggest thing on the Arts Club program was a trio for clarinet, violin and piano, cut down from the score of "The Story of a Soldier." The story of the soldier is that the military man is bewitched by the devil into playing the violin, when all he has ever played before is the accordion. The music is a grand slam-bang of rhythm, noise, dissonance, jazz, blah. Glorious Stravinski!

The above paragraphs summarize some of Stravinski's important works, so that in discussing his place in modern music we have something to go by. But one more work, not included in the programs reviewed above, must be presented in outline here. That is the composer's masterpiece to date, "The Rite of Spring." This ballet is concerned with the pagan Russian worship of the earth, and is a direct descendant of the pagan dances in Korsakov's *Snow Maiden*. The action, briefly summed up, is this:<sup>1</sup>

"It is a picture from early Russian tribal life, about 400 B.C., showing Slavic savages carrying out the rites of human sacrifices to the sun-god

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick H. Martens. *The Romance of the Arts*.

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Yarillo. In the first tableau we have a succession of dances in pleasant green meadows. First, the youths of the tribe, in glaring red and white costumes, do the 'Dance of the Adolescents' with much stamping of feet. Then the old men and the young girls of the tribe do their dances. Next comes a religious dance in which rape is expressed in mimicry, to show the tribe's desire for fruitfulness, and then a general tribal dance is followed by religious exercises. In the second tableau we have the horrors of human sacrifice. It is night on the borders of a dim Slavic land, where stone pillars and totem poles hung with the skulls of bulls rise in the moonlight. The dance of the men weaves around the young girl, loveliest of the tribe, chosen for the sacrifice before the god Yarillo rises in the east. It ends with a frenzied climax of movement, when the victim, pierced with the holy knife, sinks to the earth dead, and the tribesmen carry off her corpse, holding it stiffly above their heads."

Again that difficulty of finding words for the music. The description of Mr. Edward Moore, music critic of *The Chicago Tribune*, that "The Rite of Spring" is "steaming and marshy and saurian" hits it off well for those who have heard the work, but those who haven't may not get so

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much out of Mr. Moore's phrase.

In this, as in "Petrushka" and "The Song of the Nightingale" the orchestra is not the orchestra. We are conscious that we are hearing the same instruments we have always heard, yet tone qualities are strangely metamorphosed. The effect is something like the one we experience when we hear a familiar tune with new harmonies under it.

The orchestra of "Petrushka" is a gigantic concertina, for "Petrushka" is a ballet of the happenings at a peasants' fair. The orchestra of "The Song of the Nightingale" is perfumed, incense-sweet, thoroughly Chinese. The orchestra of "The Rite of Spring" is at once vernal and liturgic, smelling of the rain-soaked earth. Stravinski, more than any composer since Wagner, has this faculty of completely changing himself when he changes subjects. Wagner was not always Wagner. He was Sachs, he was Tristan, he was Wotan.

Stravinski represents two trends in modern music. There is the tendency toward ever greater simplification of the means of musical expression, and there is the movement toward ever increasing complexity of these same means. For example, "The Rite of Spring" uses one of the largest orchestras ever assembled. Eight horns, two

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tubas, four bassoons, two double bassoons, two bass clarinets, and a whole army of flutes, oboes, clarinets, trumpets, trombones, drums, violins, and so on. And on the other hand Stravinski writes for wind octets, orchestras of fifteen; he even achieves such complete nudity of expression as to write songs for unaccompanied voice, and pieces for unaccompanied clarinet. It is the tendency toward the simplification of media that is most significant of the modern trend, but when a composer of today thinks in terms of the grand orchestra, it is of the grandest orchestra possible that he does think.

And while on the subject of Stravinski's orchestra it is pertinent to point out what, to me at least, is his typical orchestral effect. There are probably more freak effects in his work than in that of any other modern composer. The blasts in "The Fire Bird" which are produced by four horns and sound like a multitude of klaxons can not be classed as a typical effect, nor can the *glissando* undulations of the first violins in the first movement of the same suite, or the *fortissimo* bursts of the bass tuba in "The Song of the Nightingale" be so called. But there is one effect as typical of Stravinski as a high, massed, violin tone is typical of Wagner, or the lowest tones of

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the flute typical of Debussy. That is the doubling of the celesta and the pianoforte. It occurs throughout his work, and is particularly noticeable in the Chinese march in "The Song of the Nightingale." The smoothness of the celesta is somewhat obscured by the power of the piano, or else the power of the piano is smoothed out by the blend with the celesta, according to your point of view.

The best comment on Stravinski's work, viewed from the purely technical standpoint, that I have ever seen is in an analysis of "The Rite of Spring" wherein the analyst spoke of certain chords, "apparently in C sharp minor." Making harmonic or contrapuntal analysis of a Stravinski score is like making a prosodic analysis of "The Song of Myself." It simply can't be done.

And just as the conventional cadences of verse were not for Whitman, so the conventional recurrent rhythms of the older music were not for Stravinski. So he changes his time-signatures constantly, sometimes in every bar. On my desk as I write lies a copy of the three pieces for unaccompanied clarinet. The first movement of the work is thirty measures long, and has twenty-two time signatures. The second movement is written without time; it is in the nature of a cadenza.

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The third movement, sixty-one bars long, has forty-six time-signatures. While in the main this constant shift of time-signatures is necessary, Dr. George Dyson and others have pointed out that often it is merely an affectation. In many places, as the example from "Petrushka" that Dr. Dyson gives in his book *The New Music*, music that might have been written very simply is given a complex rhythmic character to the eye that it does not have at all to the ear.

As has been mentioned before, Stravinski issues directly from Rimski-Korsakov, who taught him his technique, and from whom he derived much inspiration. "The Fire Bird" goes on where *The Golden Cockerel* and *Katchei the Deathless* leave off. "The Rite of Spring" is a sublimation of *The Snow Maiden*. But there is much that differentiates Stravinski from his master.

Of his contemporary musicians none is like him. The French Six have certain resemblances to him, but, again to quote Mr. Moore, where they have one idea he has ten. And it might be added that the one idea of the Six (there are only five left in the group, but everyone still calls them the Six) may have been borrowed from Stravinski.

If Stravinski is a trombone, Honegger is a

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piccolo and Auric and Milhaud and Poulenc are what the jazzmen call "Chinese crash" cymbals. For all his sincerity of purpose everything to which Honegger turns his hand, seems to turn to a toy. The locomotive of "Pacific 231" is run by clockwork, the Roman soldier of "Horatius Victorious" is a manikin of wood. Milhaud, probably the most talented man of the Six, is a grinning "absinthe laugh" in music. Poulenc and Georges Auric are playing with bright new rattles, voices and instruments. There is nothing of all this in Stravinski.

In fact the only one of his contemporary artists with whom Stravinski has a distinct affinity is Pablo Picasso. Picasso can draw as simple a line as Giotto. Stravinski can write as sweet a tune as Mozart. Yet neither of them can, by the very urge that causes them to create art works, produce in the Giottoesque or Mozartian manner.

In Picasso the cubes of twentieth century box architecture find interpretation. The grotesque outlines of the machines that are the basis of modern life are rendered in terms of color and line. Stravinski does the same thing in tone that Picasso does on paper or canvas. They have no "message," these men, the spirit of today simply gives them inspiration to create an art of today.

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As I sat in a room of the Mozarteum at Salzburg listening to a rehearsal of that piece of glittering geometry, the octet for wind instruments by Stravinski, I felt again the feeling I had standing in the engine room of the liner that brought me to Europe. "Machines," I thought, "the art of the machine age."

And much the same idea came to Mr. Paul Rosenfeld, who expressed it so much more beautifully than I can that I am forced to quote from *Musical Portraits*:

"With Stravinski the rhythms of machinery enter musical art. . . . Through him music has become again cubical, lapidary, massive, mechanistic. . . . There are come to be great, weighty, metallic masses, molten piles and sheets of steel and iron, shining adamantine bulks. Contours are become grim, severe, angular. Melodies are sharp, rigid, asymmetrical. Chords are uncouth, square, clusters of notes, stout and solid as the pillars that support roofs, heavy as the thuds of triphammers. Above all there is rhythm, rhythm rectangular and sheer and emphatic, rhythm that lunges and beats and reiterates and dances with all the steely perfect tirelessness of the machine, shoots out and draws back, shoots upward and shoots down, with the inhuman motion of titanic

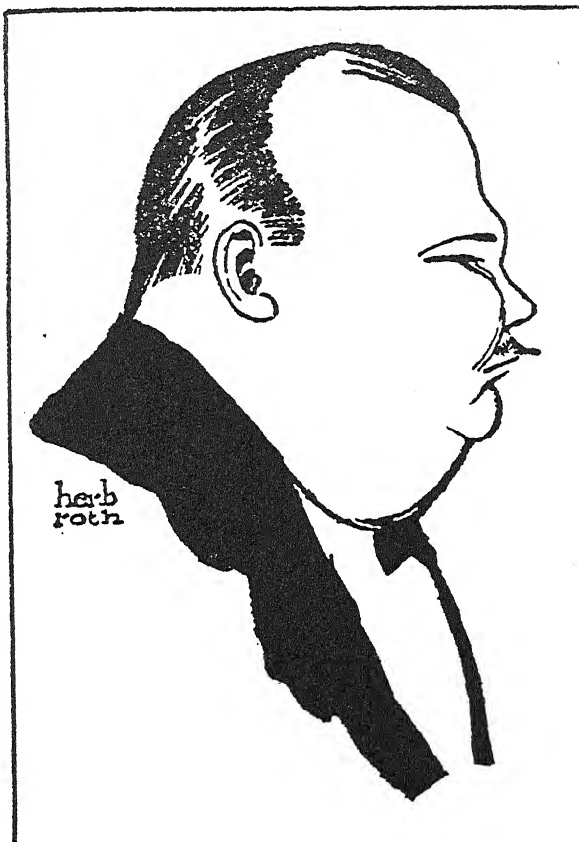
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arms of steel.

“ . . . Stravinski goes through the crowded thoroughfares, through cluttered places, through factories, hotels, wharves, sits in railway trains, and the glare and tumult and pulsation, the engines and locomotives and cranes, the whole mad phantasmagoria of the modern city, evoke images in him, inflame him to reproduce them in all their weight and giant hood and mass, their blackness and luridness and power.”

And to close this all too unsatisfactory discussion there is nothing more fitting than a line from the same eminent critic. It was not said of Igor Stravinski, but fits him just the same: “Great Sun Musorgski, shine down upon your progeny!”

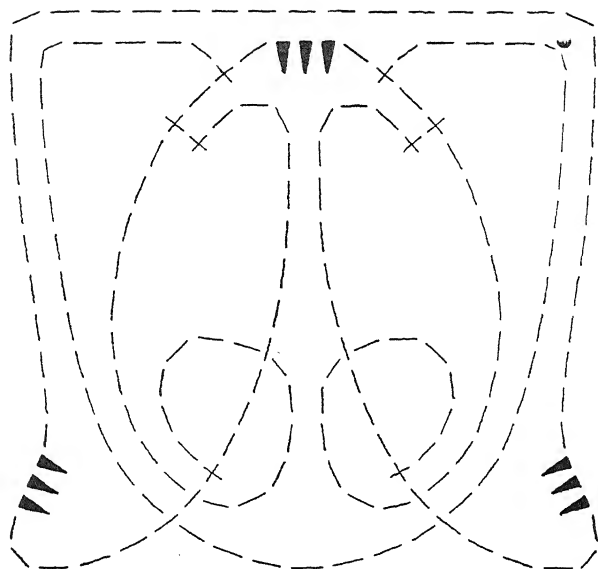
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*Paul Whiteman. From a drawing by Herb Roth.  
By courtesy of the Metropolitan Musical Bureau.*

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## THE LATEST LIVELY ART

I THINK it was John Alden Carpenter who did it. His "Krazy Kat" was probably the first piece of super-jazz, the first fusion of the jazz and the concert style, the first startling exhibition of the fact that the highbrows are taking up jazz.

Six years ago anyone who suggested that the music of the American dance hall was America's



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most important contribution to the progress of the arts would have produced merely a raising of eyebrows among the heavy politicians of the conservatories. Unceremoniously would he have been excommunicated from the cult of the defenders of the faith of Johannes the Brahmin.

Today the situation is reversed. Anyone in the profession of tone who does not believe in jazz is considered either slightly demented, or else as some sort of rare antique or fossil, comparable perhaps to a manuscript in the handwriting of Hucbald.

What is this new creeping plant that is gradually disintegrating the ivory tower? How shall we define it?

We can't. One can grow Websterish and say:  
"Jazz is syncopated dance music peculiar to America, in the rendition of which a certain kind of orchestra is employed. (See ORCHESTRA.)"

Or one can grow fanciful and say:  
"Jazz is a cartoon by Goldberg scored for saxophone, banjo and drums."

Or wax Sandburgian:  
"Jazz is the laugh of a golden frog with a sliver of the moon lost in its belly."

In fact one can say numberless pretty and meaningless things about it and get nowhere.

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For that matter no word used to describe a school of music can be defined. When you try to define "romantic," "classical," "modern," you eventually come face to face with the aged ghost-question "What is Art?" before which you flee.

But this one can do. One can show how jazz is different from other kinds of music.

Let us sweep back over the aeons to the days when people said "twenty-three skiddoo" and jazz was not. The ancients of the period danced to ragtime. One of their most popular pieces was "Too Much Mustard" which was described as "Turkey Trot Dance Music." And "Too Much Mustard" was merely a bad march in a fast *tempo*. The monotony of its constantly repeated melody was unrelieved by any variation in instrumentation or *nuance*. In other words, to use Robert E. Sherwood's phrase, it was just terrible.

I don't know exactly what followed the turkey trot. It might have been the grapevine and it might have been the tango. At any rate the tango and the fox trot eventually held the stage, incorruptible, and ragtime was changed. It ceased to be a bad march and became something distinctive, at that time defined by no other name. Rhythms became syncopated, "breaks" occurred to relieve the monotony of the music. In fact, so far as the ac-

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tual sound stuff of it was concerned, there was very little difference between ragtime and the newer jazz. But ragtime was different from jazz in this very essential particular—the jazz orchestra had not yet come. The old dance orchestra had no saxophones, had no banjos or elaborate traps. The clarinet had not yet learned to scream, the trumpets were not gagged and so could not give out the multitudinous effects to which we are now accustomed.

And then came jazz. In its earliest form it originated in the south, in New Orleans. "The Original Dixieland Jass Band" spread the new gospel, first in their home town, next on the roof of the La Salle Hotel in Chicago, then in New York, and finally through phonograph records.

Their biggest hit was "The Livery Stable Blues." To describe that masterpiece I must resort to an elaborate simile; it sounded like a crazy clarinetist broadcasting from a boiler factory on a night when static was particularly bad.

The melodic line of "The Livery Stable Blues" was all but non-existent. Its rhythm was not exactly syncopated, it was simply goofy. And, so far as harmony was concerned, the wildest dissonant dream of a Francis Poulenc is as Schubert's unfinished symphony by comparison.

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“The Original Dixieland Jass Band” consisted of only a few players. No one was admitted to their number who could read notes. Ignorance of music was an essential to membership. Under such conditions they soon had hundreds of imitators. The word “jass” soon became sandpapered off into “jazz.”

Then came the war. The country was deluged with cheap songs to drum up recruits and to squeeze cash out of the populace for “Liberty” loans. Hundreds of thousands of young men in training camps had to be amused to keep them from thinking. Under such conditions this baby of the lively arts, guided by its newly acquired godfather the saxophone, took on an astounding and unnatural growth. Publishers put out jazz songs by the million, cutting down on the size of the printed sheet for patriotic reasons and thereby adding a neat bit to the profits they made.

After the war came a reaction, and the new jazz was made. Gone is the grinding, monotonous cacophony. No more do jazzmen improvise any old thing to get by. All effects are studied out and written down. But jazz it is, because the queer, new and beautiful orchestral effects of a band like Whiteman’s are directly descended from those produced by that group of New Or-

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leans boys who played together in a barn after their work was done.

The jazz orchestra of today is a perfect instrument, as perfect in its field as a large symphony orchestra is in other fields. But, as Deems Taylor has pointed out, the jazz orchestra is up against a stone wall. It has nothing to play but stupid little songs. There is no form in music more tyrannic than that of the popular song. The very number of measures in it is prescribed. A jazz melody of more or less than thirty-two bars will not be published. It must also have an introduction of sixteen measures and a prelude of four, which sections of the piece serve no other purpose than to fill out the printed pages.

Surely under such conditions the jazz orchestra would have degenerated, unless one thing happened. The highbrows had to take it up and save it.

"Krazy Kat" was the first piece of super jazz. Carpenter has followed it up with another ballet, "Skyscrapers," in which much use is made of jazz rhythms. Then there are Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue" and Sowerby's "Synconata." Edward Collins wrote a jazz movement in his piano concerto, which was quite appropriate, for if any form in music needs monkey glands it is the con-

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certo. Eric Delamarter has written a jazz symphony in three movements. A grim, Ben Hechtic piece of jazz, which, it is rumored was written by the violinist Samuel Gardner and which was played on the contest program of the Evanston festival of 1925 did not win the prize, but that was the fault of the judges, not the composer. Maier and Pattison play a little jazz study for two pianos, by somebody or other. Stravinski has written pure jazz in "The Story of a Soldier," and perhaps in other works less known on this side of the Atlantic. The Sixmen have played around with it. Carl Ruggles has produced a piece called "Daniel Jazz" for trumpet sextet. When Casella visited America he took home with him a large number of jazz records, and perhaps he also will break out in the idiom. All this is not a tremendous list, but five years ago none of it existed at all, and before this is published works of similar nature may exceed the number mentioned here.

Another healthy development is the use of the jazz orchestra for non-jazz effects, as in Herbert's excellent suite of serenades. This is good, but not so important as the use of jazz rhythms in non-jazz forms.

This music presents a totally different picture

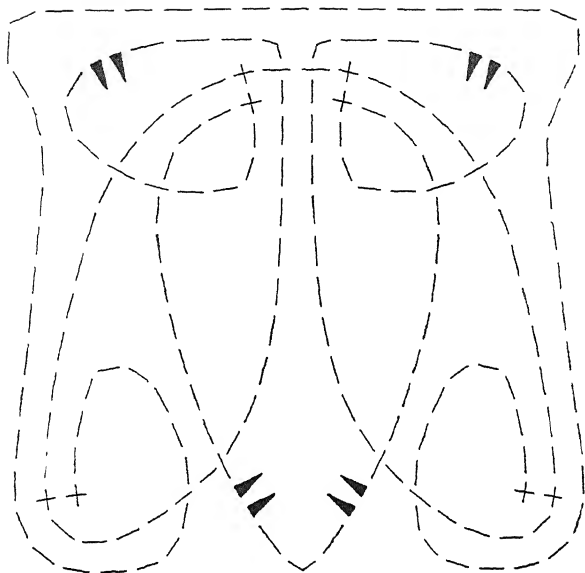
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from all the rest of contemporary tonal art. Compare for example a piece by Kern or Berlin with one by Stravinski. In Stravinski we have the modern fruit of ages of ripening civilization. The music reaches back over ages of Slav culture, back eventually to the soil and the peasants, the earth-people of Russia.

Jazz is not the music of the land. It is the music of new cities. It blows across the American prairies, but does not come out of them. It is the music of hot-dog wagons and elevated trains, the music of morning papers published at nine in the evening, the music of the quick lunch and the signboard and the express elevator. If America contributes nothing more to the progress of the arts, in this she will have given enough.

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## NUMBERS

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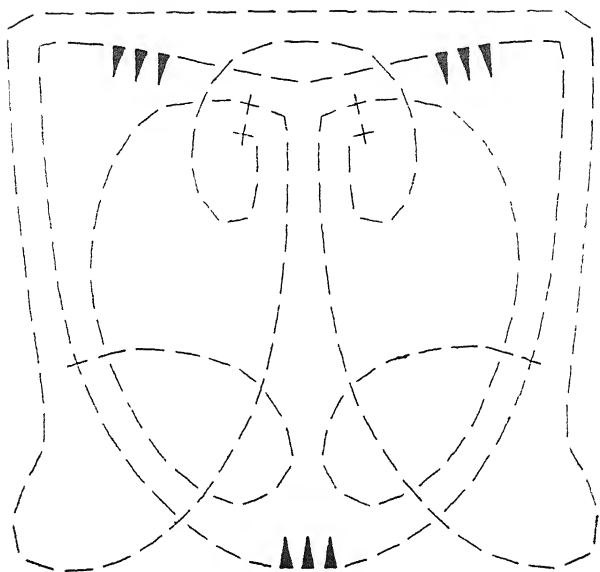
**T**HERE is to me something repulsive about the word "number" as applied to a piece of music. The word smells of the movie "cue sheet," whereon little snips of tunes are written and numbered to be played in accompaniment to the pictures. For terror, Number Seventeen is to be played, for love, Number Four, and so on.



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In the parlance of orchestra pits everything is a "number," from a Gregorian chant to a piece by Arnold Schoenberg. It may be that this labeling of masterpieces can account for my disgust at the word, but it is more probably just an instinctive, inexplicable dislike.

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## THE MUSICAL BABEL

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**A** CUSTOM of modern musicians which to me, as a performer and an avid reader of program notes, has been most annoying, is the custom of writing *tempo* and interpretative directions in the native language of the composer. There is no reason, excuse or logic in back of it, save an uncomfortable chauvinism.

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The custom is a fairly old one. Schumann did it, and Mendelssohn on occasion, but it was not until after Wagner that it became general.

Wagner's grandiose theories of the art work of the *deutsches Volk* probably led him to write everything connected with that art work in German. But he is startlingly inconsistent about it. He writes such directions as *ein wenig rallentando* on every page, and he uses *ausdrucksvoll* and *espressivo* several bars apart in the course of the same tune.

If every composer did this sort of thing a musician would have to know English, French, German, Russian, Spanish, Hungarian, Hebrew, Gaelic, Dutch, Swedish, and the other Scandinavian tongues, Choctaw, Arabic, *die schoenste lengevitch*, Greek, Polish, and other Slavic languages, as well as a certain amount of Japanese and Sanskrit to get by.

There exists a musical Esperanto: the Italian language. For centuries Italian words have been used in music, until today every musician, no matter where he lives, understands the Italian adjectives and adverbs and nouns that are called musical terms. *Allegro* can be understood by the merest beginner in music, whether he lives in Kokomo or Madagascar, but *fast*, *lebhaft* and *vif*

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may not have a tremendous amount of meaning in Moscow. There is really no necessity to write *schneller als vorher*, as Strauss does. *Piu mosso* says the same thing, and says it succinctly.

Percy Grainger is the only composer I know of who does this thing with any tinge of consistency. Grainger writes *loud* and *soft* in connection with his English *tempo* directions, whereas all the others, from Wagner down to d'Indy write *pp* and *ff* which are simply abbreviations of the Italian words *pianissimo* and *fortissimo*.

If our directions are to be nationalized in this way, why not our notation? Why should there not be one set of musical symbols for the French, one for the English, another for the Germans, and so on? If we are going to make it difficult for musicians of other nations than our own to understand how our music is to be played, why not make it so difficult that they can't play it at all?

Still, it can not be denied that sometimes the Italian symbols do not work. For example, in Francis Poulenc's sonata for clarinet and bassoon occurs the phrase *en dehors*, literally, "out of doors," meaning that the clarinet voice should stand well out from that of the bassoon. No Italian term would fit here. Again, on occasion the musician wishes to convey some particularly

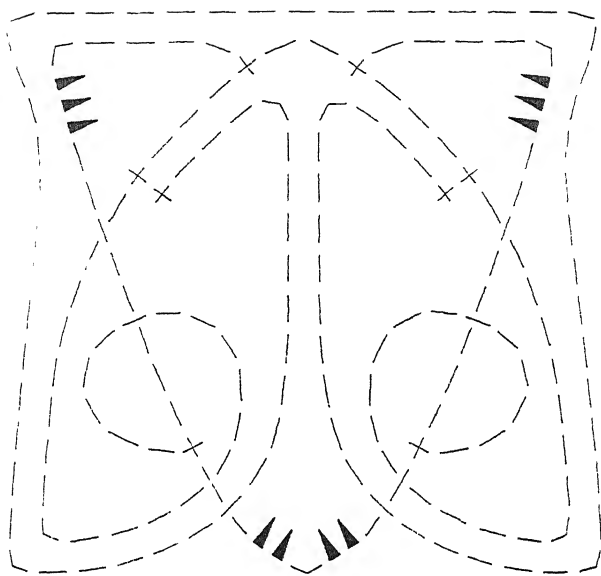
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poetic idea in connection with the performance of his music, such as the beautiful *mysterieux, romantique, legendaire*, of Skryabin, which poetic idea can not be gotten across with the conventional Italian words. But these are interpretative directions, and cases like the above are comparatively rare in occurrence. On the whole the Italian, with its manifest advantage of international application, is the best language for the composer to use.

(And yet I sometimes wish certain men had stuck to their native tongues. If Balfe had written everything in Gaelic there would be far fewer performances of *The Bohemian Girl* and that would be a blessing.)

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## SYNCRONIZING SAXOPHONES

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**I**T IS a strange paradox in American musical affairs that the most popular instrument in the country today is the one about which the least is known by the laymen or even by the professional. When one enquires concerning the history of the saxophone in music schools one rarely gets any answer at all, for the simple reason that

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the teachers as a rule consider the instrument below their dignity.

The Average American Citizen knows even less than the professors. I have heard it said by those who hear the instrument over the radio every night, that: (1) the saxophone was invented in New York in 1915 by Irving Berlin; (2) it was invented by some German during the war, as an instrument with which to produce a moral decadence among the allies, and as such had the approval of the arch-Hun Hindenburg; (3) that it is a very old instrument resurrected during the war.

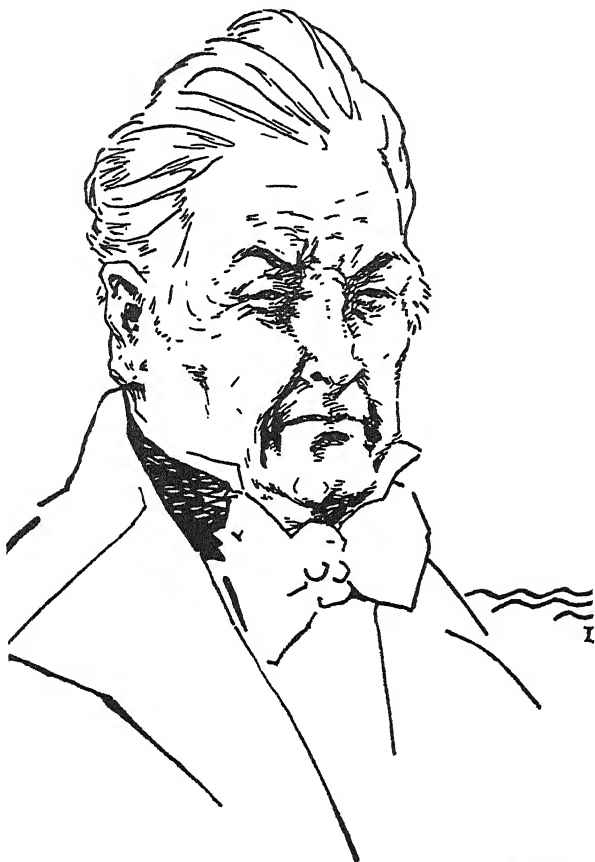
These are not theories I have invented for the occasion. I have actually heard these wild fantasies solemnly stated as being the true history of the instrument.

As a matter of fact the story of the saxophone is curious enough. It was not an invention. It was a happening, an occurrence, the most successful failure in all musical history.

But before delving into the saxophonic archives let us sketch briefly the career of the romantic character who discovered the instrument.

Antoine Joseph Sax was born at Dinant, in Belgium, on the sixth of November, 1814. His

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*Antoine Joseph Sax, the father of the Saxophone. From a contemporary oil painting.*

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father, Joseph Sax, was a well known instrument maker, who sent his son to Brussels to study the flute and clarinet. Antoine Sax, who called himself Adolphe for no particular reason, worked in his father's shop, and here began his experiments that led to the saxophone. In 1842 he went to Paris and set up shop as an instrument maker. In 1845 the saxophone was introduced into French army bands, and the following year it was patented.

Sax was "the great-I-am" most of his life. He saw to it that a host of military men, composers, (among whom was Hector Berlioz) and newspaper men were on his side and singing his praises. Although scarcely a wind instrument in use today was not in some way improved by Sax (beside the subject of these lines he invented the family of saxhorns, which are the tubas of the modern brass band), he was not satisfied with the credit due him for his own genius, but appropriated the credit due others for their inventions.

Eventually Sax got a monopoly contract to supply instruments for the French army. The first thing he did was to abolish horns, oboes and bassoons from the official bands, not because these instruments are unsuitable for band work, but because it meant much money for him when

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he replaced them with saxophones and saxhorns. When a reaction toward sanity came, the horns, oboes, and bassoons were restored but the Sax instruments were retained, thus enlarging the size of the band and swelling and sweetening its tone.

Being no business man, the good Adolphe was always in hot water financially. Brilliant achievements were his, gold medals came at every exposition, but the francs ran through his fingers. Eventually he was forced to sell all his possessions and died in poverty and obscurity in 1894.

In the above I have touched on only two of his inventions and on his many improvements. He also produced many queer, distorted pieces of musical *distocia*, none of which meant anything. It is, after all, the saxophone, and after that the saxhorns, that make this man important for us of today.

And now as to the saxophone. It was the accidental outcome of attempted improvements on the bass clarinet. In order to show just what Sax was attempting to do to that instrument we shall have to go into the details of its construction.

To the average concert goer the difference between the clarinet and the oboe is purely one of *timbre*. He knows that there is a difference in the reeds of the two, the clarinet having a single

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strip of cane vibrating against a rubber, wood, or glass mouthpiece, while the oboe has two pieces of cane vibrating against each other, and this explains the difference in his mind.

Actually the difference is far greater. The oboe is a continuous cone from the small pipe that connects the reed with the wooden body of the instrument down to the small bell. The clarinet, on the other hand, is a cylinder all the way down its length, except for the last few inches.

This difference in the shape of the instruments accounts for vast differences in their respective techniques. On the oboe there is a key at the back, which, when opened, lifts all fingerings an octave. Thus, roughly speaking, the fingerings in all octaves of the oboe are identical. An A on the first ledger line above the treble clef is fingered like the A on the second space of the same clef, with the exception that in the case of the first A the back thumb key is employed.

The thumb key on the clarinet, however, due to the cylindrical bore of that instrument, lifts all fingerings an octave and a half. The two A's referred to above are not at all alike in fingering, for the positions in all octaves of the clarinet are different. Therefore, so far as finger technique is concerned, the clarinet is a much more compli-

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cated proposition than the oboe.

Due to its tremendous size, the bass clarinet is even more complicated than the clarinet. If there is a more unwieldy, oversized, generally cursed instrument in the world than the bass clarinet it is not in use in everyday musical practice. (I speak from experience.)

Therefore Sax set himself out to improve the bass clarinet, by making the fingerings in all octaves of its range identical. As will be seen by the foregoing paragraphs, to do this he had to make his instrument conical in shape instead of cylindrical. Because of the difficulty, if not impossibility, of boring a continuous cone bent as a bass clarinet is bent in a piece of wood, Sax was forced to make the body of his new creation out of brass. So he made a conical brass clarinet, with certain modifications in the arrangement of the keys, and lo! a new thing was born. In tone and technique it was not a bass clarinet at all. So the new thing was called "saxophone" by its father, who set himself to making a whole family of its kind, eventually making saxophones of six different sizes.

The subsequent history of the instrument is fairly well known. It was introduced into the bands of the French army, as I have pointed out

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above, and became popular here as a dance orchestra instrument during the war period. Because of its continuous use as a jazz instrument there has come about an attitude on the part of the American public and the more ignorant class of American musicians that assumes that the instrument is unsuited for anything else than jazz. Nothing is more fallacious. Perhaps it might be of interest to enumerate some of the works of "classical" composers in which the saxophone finds a part.

Bizet—First "L'Arlesienne" suite.

Cowen—*Thorgrim*.

Debussy—Rhapsody for saxophone solo with orchestra.

Kastner—*The Last King of Judea*.

Loeffler—"Divertimento Espagnole" for saxophone with orchestra. (I once wrote to Loeffler about this work and got back the following remarkable and unsigned screed: "Mr. Loeffler, who is ill at present, wishes to say to Mr. Frankenstein that the Rapsodie for saxophone and orchestra is not published and that the score has been destroyed as well as the parts. The work was less than unimportant and hence its destruction is of no loss to the world.")

Meyerbeer—*The Huguenots*.

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Reissiger—Saxophone sextet.

Strauss—"Domestic" symphony.

Thomas—*Hamlet*.

This is merely an off-hand list of things I happen to know about. Doubtless it could be trebled in size with research. In it I have omitted mention of all super-jazz pieces by "classical" composers.

When you stop to think about it the saxophone has made a remarkable success. It was more than thirty years before the clarinet was used outside of a military band, and more than a century before it became an integral part of the symphony orchestra.

In the seventies of the last century a man named Henri Kling was professor of instrumentation at the great Paris conservatory. He wrote a book on the subject he taught, and in that book he says of the saxophone, "the deeply religious nature of this instrument makes it unsuitable for use in dance music."

That was what they thought of the instrument in those days. And it is true that the saxophone is an instrument essentially liturgic in character. To prove this let me cite the case of the piece of super-jazz of the 1925 Evanston festival, referred to in a previous chapter. This work, called

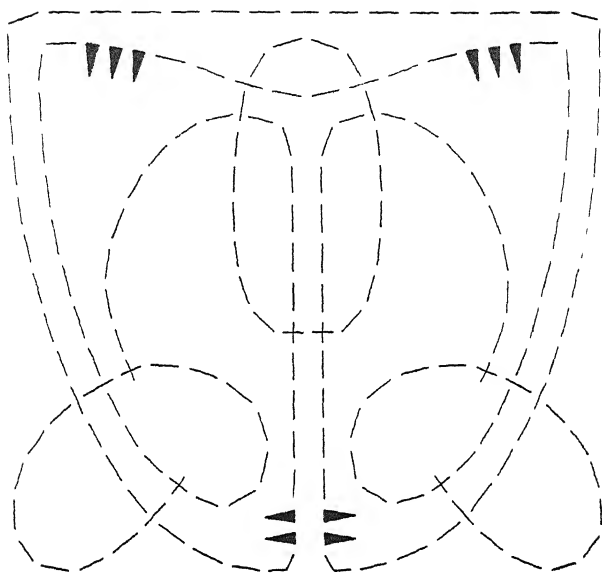
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an American rhapsody, "Broadway," rises to a tremendous and deadly serious climax in the organ and orchestra. In the *denouement* occurs an acrid, ascetic, hard-edged saxophone solo as suggestive of jazz as "no" is suggestive of "yes."

Or again let me refer you to that magnificent and extended saxophone solo in the first movement of Bizet's first "L'Arlesienne" suite. And last of all let me invite you to go, at your own expense, to the next band concert that comes your way. Hear how the burden of the thick, warm, accompaniment is carried by the saxophone. Hear how the verdant, earthy, slow section of the overture to "Oberon" as arranged for band, depends upon the saxophone for its effect.

The jazzmen have perfected their own astonishing technique with the instrument, as they have with all instruments, a technique as different from symphony orchestra playing as a photograph and a cartoon of the same subject are different (and a technique as difficult as symphony orchestra work), and that is good, but, in the case of the saxophone, let us not forget the deep and the warm and the mystic emotions it can exercise when played "straight," for music can not afford to do without such instruments.

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## LES GROTESQUES DE CHAYKOVSKI

**H**AD BERLIOZ been alive to hear these two anecdotes about Chaykovski's two worst works he would surely have included them in his *Grotesques de la Musique*.

Once, a long time ago, a dear friend of mine who lives in Buffalo, heard a concert in that town which ended with the "March Slave." An

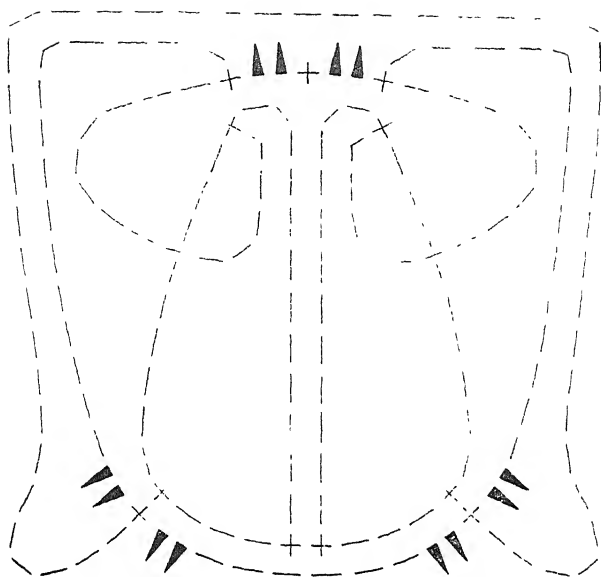


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elderly lady of the word-fountain class, in speaking about the concert later said to him, "Isn't that Chaykovski number a wonderful thing? You know, when they played it I could just see those little pickaninnies running around!"

This is almost equaled by an experience of mine. A gentleman I know told me of a concert he had recently graced with his presence in Washington. This program either opened or closed with the overture "1812." "Just think of it," said he, "more than a hundred years after the British destroyed our capital they play a piece there celebrating the war that the burning occurred in."

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## WIND PLAYERS LUCKLESS

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**I**N THE morning mail have come three pamphlets. One announces a series of recitals to be given during the next concert season, one announces the courses and advertises the teachers of a well known conservatory, and one has to do with a contest for young musicians.

Running my eye down the list of recitalists I

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see the same old story. Pianists, violinists, singers; singers, pianists, violinists, with a 'cellist or two thrown in. They will all play the same programs. If twelve violinists visit us on this concert series ten will play the Mendelssohn concerto. We shall not escape at least five performances of the invocation of Orpheus in old Jacopo Peri's opera, and a piano recital without the usual Chopin waltzes and nocturnes and the customary Beethoven sonatas would not be a piano recital.

Of all these announced recitals perhaps half a dozen will be superb. I doubt that one will be bad. Most of them will keep a dead level of mediocre excellence.

If the recitalists would only give us something new we could excuse them some of their faults. But novelty they will not present. They claim the critics will not give them enough attention if they do so. There are critics and critics, but the only ones whose opinions really mean anything, far from disparaging an artist who plays or sings new stuff, will rise from the house and kiss him.

Turning to the conservatory bulletin I find the teachers most advertised are those who teach the piano, voice and violin. In this respect the music schools bear a remarkable resemblance to the salt mill in the Sinbad story.

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Across the top of the contest advertisement is printed, "Contest for young artists in piano, voice, and violin."

The conservatories advertise the teachers of three other instruments, but not so extensively as the teachers of the Trinity. The harp, violoncello and organ get considerable attention in the schools. The first two are heard too infrequently, and a recital on either is a boon to the harried critic.

The organ finds extensive use in two institutions, the church and the movie palace. In the former it is merely an organ. In the latter it is never anything but a \$1,000,000 Grande Organ.

The church organ in the service is used, most frequently, to accompany bad hymns. When it is used in good religious music it generally plays orchestra parts, and it can never play them effectively.

Occasionally we hear an organ recital in a church. I remember one such organ recital on the program of which was not a symphony by Widor. Therefore the organist was censured by his colleagues. Leaving aside the fact that organ symphonies by poor Widor are played too often, they should never be played at all, for they are as mediocre as Sinding's orchestral symphonies.

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Doubtless there is a large literature of solo music for organ, but we may thank the players of the instrument for keeping it hidden.

The organ in the movie palace is put to worse uses than it is in church. Here its big function is to plug cheap songs that are too bad to sell by any other means.

About a dozen times in a season we are given concerts of chamber music, generally made up of string trios and quartets. So far as I know no trio or quartet organization in American musical history has succeeded in filling a hall. This is a shame, for there are great works written for the quartet, such as Chausson's essay of that form, and Beethoven's many examples of it, and many, many others. And yet in a large measure the American public is justified in staying away from the chamber music hall. For the average chamber concert is not a concert but a Solemn Rite. It is as serious as a funeral, as grave as I imagine a canonization ceremony at St. Peter's would be. It would be so easy to loosen up the solemnity of these performances by an occasional performance of a wind octet, or an oboe, viola and piano trio, or any other of the hundreds of pieces of chamber music in which wind instruments are used, but never a note of this literature is heard.

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It is easy to see why the voice leads the recital field. No instrument can rival the voice in flexibility and subtlety of expression. A Shalyapin recital takes us to the heights, a recital by Signora Galli-Curci-Samuels sometimes does. (Do not misunderstand this. The bell song in *Lakme* is a superb *tour de force* of vocalization and melody, but what excuse is there for a "Mad Scene"?)

And what the piano lacks in tone is made up by its marvelous power of conveying harmonic material, a power in which only the orchestra surpasses it.

But, compared with wind instruments, I rather gag at the violin. Why this instrument should control the field of recital work for non-harmonic instruments I can not understand. I am not disparaging it, for works like the third concerto that Saint-Saens wrote for it have a beauty and charm that could have been expressed through no other medium, but I maintain that the clarinet and oboe and English horn, and, properly handled, the trumpet and French horn, are capable of just as infinite varieties of expression as the violin.

And yet there is no chance for players of wind instruments to break into the recital hall. The conservatories pay scant attention to them, hiring

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beer garden orchestra men to teach them, and offering no scholarships or any other advantages to students of these instruments.

The clubs that run the contests, which are generally a great incentive to work among the contestants, rarely, if ever, offer the wind player any chances. And it goes without saying that no manager ever books a player of a wind instrument.

Certain musicians, intellectually of the submerged tenth, will tell you that wind instruments suffer from some mysterious artistic deficiency that makes them unfit for use in solo work. This stupendous foolishness can be disproved in two ways, first by pointing out the numberless solos for wind instruments in orchestral literature (such as the second movement of the Brahms fourth symphony, the second movement of the Dvorak fifth symphony, the nocturne in the "Midsummer Night's Dream" music, and the slow movement of Chaykovski's fourth symphony) and the fact that many of the greatest masters of music have contributed to the literature of wind solo. Had such a deficiency existed as these good people claim there would be no Handel oboe concertos, and no Spohr clarinet concertos.

It is true that there is not a very large litera-

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ture for wind solo, but that is easily explained. Not until recent times did wind instruments attain the mechanical perfection that the violin has had for centuries. The violin was a perfected thing before the clarinet was even invented. But there is a sufficiently large wind solo repertory for all practical purposes. Let us look over the repertory for the instrument with which I am best acquainted, the clarinet. Many of the pieces listed below I have in my library. I include chamber works, in which the clarinet has a prominent part.

Brahms—Two sonatas, clar. and pf. (Op. 120)

Trio, clar. pf. and 'cello. (Op. 114)

Quintet, clar. and strings. (Op. 115)

Beethoven—Trio, clar. pf. and 'cello. (Op. 11)

Three duets, clar. and bassoon. (Op. 147)

Busoni—Concertino, clar. and small orchestra.

Coleridge-Taylor—Four waltzes, clar. and pf.

Debussy—Rhapsody, clar. and orch.

Small piece, clar. and pf.

Honegger—Three pieces for clar. and pf.

Mason, (Daniel G.)—Pastoral, clar., pf. and violin. (Op. 8) Sonata, clar. and pf. (Op. 14)

Mendelssohn—Two pieces for clar. and alto clar. with pf. (Opp. 113 and 114) Sonata, clar. and pf. (unpublished)

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- Meyerbeer—*The Loves of Tevelinde*, an opera for soprano, clar. obligato and chorus. The clarinet player has a dramatic part on the stage.
- Mozart—Concerto for clar. and orch.  
Quintet for clar. and strings.  
Adagio for two alto clars. and bassoon.  
Adagio for two clars. and three alto clars.
- Poulenc—Sonata for clar. and bassoon.
- Reger—Three sonatas for clar. and pf. (Opp. 49 and 197)
- Schumann—Fantasy pieces for clar. and pf.
- Spohr—Two concertos for clar. and orch. (Opp. 26 and 57)  
Potpourri for clar. and pf. (Op. 80)  
Fantasia and Variations for clar. and pf. (Op. 81)  
Six German songs with clar. and pf. (Op. 103)
- Stravinski—Three pieces for clar. unaccompanied.  
Trio, "The Story of a Soldier" for violin, pf. and clar.  
Four songs, "Lullabies of a Cat" for contralto and three clars.
- Taneiev—Arabesque for clar. and pf.
- Weber—Concertino for clar. and orch. (Op. 26)  
Two concertos for clar. and orch. (Opp. 73 and 74)
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Quintet for clar. and strings. (Op. 34)

Variations for clar. and pf. (Op. 33)

Concert duet for clar. and pf. (Op. 48)

The above list includes only clarinet works by composers of outstanding fame. It is far from complete, but probably takes in a good two-thirds of all such works. In compiling it I have left out the chamber works in which the instrument does not take an outstanding part, such as the octets for wind of Beethoven and Stravinski and the serenades for wind of Wolf and Strauss.

A list three times as long as the one above could be made of the clarinet works by clarinet players such as Lazarus, the Baermann family, and Ivan Mueller. Above all, the magnificent blood and thunder caprices of Ernesto Cavallini, comparable to the violin caprices of Paganini, should be included in such a list.

Of clarinet transcriptions there exist uncataloged hordes.

I do not claim that every work mentioned here is a masterpiece, but if every recitalist played only masterpieces there would be far fewer recitals. I do claim that there is much good music written for the clarinet, flute, oboe, and French horn that should be played and is not. Why it is not I am at a loss to discover. As I have endeav-

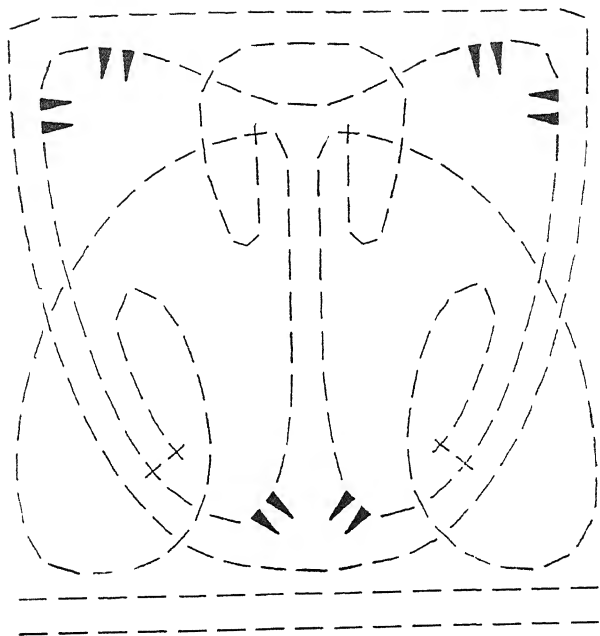
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ored to show in the opening paragraphs of this essay, there are good and valid reasons for putting it on public programs.

There is hope for the future in one regard. As I said before only recently did wind instruments attain the mechanical perfection that stringed instruments have had for centuries. The modern composers, by virtue of this fact, are writing far more music for these instruments than formerly. So the inevitable trend of musical progress will eventually bring the wind instrument into the recital hall and chamber music room where it has a rightful place.

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## A CHICAGO SYMPHONY

ONCE when the Chicago Symphony orchestra had played the London Symphony of Ralph Vaughan Williams, Mr. Edward Moore, in his review of the performance in *The Chicago Tribune*, suggested that something of the kind could be done for Chicago.

The idea is fascinating. Williams' work is a

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masterpiece, not only as pure music, but also because it is probably the only piece of program music in existence that follows closely and absolutely its program. (The joker is that after Albert Coates wrote the program, Williams repudiated what Coates had written—but that is beside the point.)

The London symphony presents the city from a standpoint that fuses both sociology and romance. The aged, mysterious Thames forms its undercurrent, and on top of it are presented successively the noise and jar of London streets, the brooding, haunting aspect of slums in fog, the pathos and joy of a slum jollification, and last of all a determined, gaunt, revolutionary "Hunger March" of those who watch others eat.

Now there is a man who has been doing this sort of thing about Chicago in words, and has become world famous thereby. The first poem of Carl Sandburg to attract any attention was about Chicago "Hog Butcher for the World." So if we want a symphony about Chicago Sandburg's writings can furnish us with a program.

Here is the literary outline for a Chicago symphony (or pedantically speaking a suite) in five movements, none of them very long. The quotations for all the movements but the third are

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GONZALES 21

Carl Sandburg

*Carl Sandburg. From a sketch by  
Rosendo Gonzales*

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from "The Windy City," that for the third movement is an entire poem from Sandburg's first book, *Chicago Poems*.

1—*Largo, Molto maestoso e solenne*

"So between the Great Lakes,  
The Grand Detour and the Grand Prairie,  
The living lighted skyscrapers stand,  
Spotting the blue dusk with checkers  
of yellow."

(*Full orchestra, emphasis on the dark colors, 'celli, basses, bassoons, bass clarinet, tuba, trombones.*)

2—*Adagio*—

"...the monotonous houses go mile on mile  
Along monotonous streets out to the prairies—"

(*A troubled and mournful music. A sort of cubistic blue twilight expressed in tone.*)

3—*Scherzetto, Allegretto*—

"The fog comes  
on little cat feet.  
It sits looking  
over harbor and city  
on silent haunches  
and then moves on."

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(*Light scoring, mainly muted violins, with brass wood and percussions handled delicately as punctuation and contrast.*)

4—*Scherzo, Allegro con fuoco*—

“...the jazz timebeats  
Of...clumsy mass shadows  
Moan in saxophone undertones.”

(*A jazz movement with jazz scoring. Saxophones and banjos must be brought into the symphony orchestra for this. As a trio there should be a wailing sentimental tune, contrasting the snappy jazz of the other themes.*)

5—*Allegro tempestuoso*—

“If the big houses with little families  
And the little houses with big families  
Sneer at each other's bars of misunderstanding;  
Pity us when we shackle and kill each other  
And believe at first we understand  
And later say we wonder why.”

(*Dissonant, biting, furious, acrid, nervous. Like a piece by Darius Milhaud with Milhaud's humor left out.*)

Now of course this is very sketchy. Really the best program for a Chicago symphony would be the entire poem “The Windy City,” but I have

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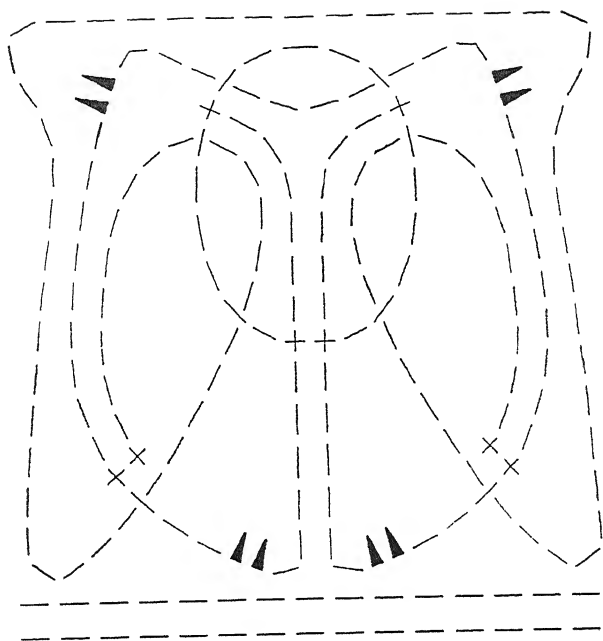


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tried to show here how the individual movements should go, by means of quotations.

I give this idea free to any composer who wants it, provided that he let me edit the work or destroy it before it is submitted either to publisher or conductor.

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## THE SINGERS' A

I WONDER why singers insist on softening the English short "a" into "ah." Nobody ever sings about "the glowing sands"; it is always "the glowing sonds." This softening often leads to ridiculous distortions of the language because it is almost always overdone.

But, the singers will counter, "a" is a coarse,

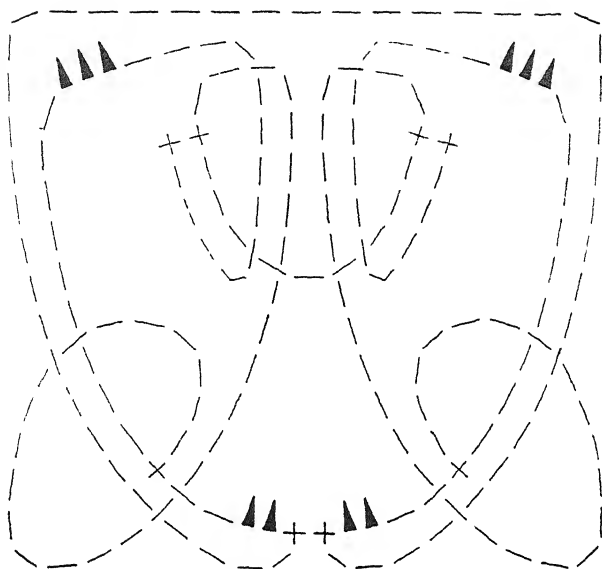
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unmusical sound. Promptly they will pronounce a flat caricature of an "a," that, so far as I know, exists in no language of the earth. There are certain words containing "a" that can not be softened up in this way, "black" for example. I venture to say that I have heard this word sung a hundred times or more, and never have I heard a singer foolish enough to pronounce it "block."

Now if the English "a" can be sung in "black" without wrecking the performance, why not in every instance?

I have heard it done with good effect a number of times. The "a" is softened just a trifle; it is scarcely different from the ordinary speaking vowel, and the words in which it occurs get over with none of their significance distorted by mispronunciation.

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## BRAHMS AND THE TYRANNY OF FORM

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**T**HE CONCERTO of Brahms does not please me better than any other of his works. He is certainly a great musician, even a master, but, in his case, his mastery overwhelms his inspiration. So many preparations and circumlocutions for something which ought to come and charm us at once—and nothing does come but

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boredom. His music is not warmed by any genuine emotion. It lacks poetry, but makes great pretensions to profundity. These depths contain nothing; they are void. Take the opening of the concerto, for instance. It is an introduction, a preparation for something fine; an admirable pedestal for a statue; but the statue is lacking, we only get a second pedestal piled upon the first. I do not know whether I have properly expressed the thoughts, or rather feelings which Brahms' music awakes in me. I mean to say that he never expresses anything, or, when he does, he fails to express it fully. His music is made up of fragments of some indefinable *something*, skilfully welded together. The whole lacks definite contour, color, life."

The above criticism was written by a man who had the colossal bad taste to suggest that *Parsifal* was good ballet material, and who was so myopic in his musical outlook as to call *Boris Godunov* "the lowest, commonest parody of music." It is taken from a letter written by Chaykovski to Nadeshda von Meck in 1880. The concerto mentioned is the one for violin.

Exaggerated as it is, however, Chaykovski's opinion of Brahms is essentially true. How masterfully the Russian describes some movements

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of the second and third symphonies of the German in the phrase: "His music is made up of fragments of some indefinable *something*, skillfully welded together." Of the piano concertos there is no simile like Chaykovski's two pedestals.

The trouble with Brahms was that his inspiration was rarely more than thirty-two measures long. The extended concerto and symphony forms were not the outgrowth of a torrent of melody inside him. It seems rather that he *thought* of composing a symphony and deliberately sat down with his tunes and worked them into sonata form, making use of his unexcelled technical mastery to fill in what inspiration could never fill in.

In listening to the second and third symphonies and the last movement of the fourth, in hearing any of the concertos but the one for violin and 'cello, the obvious brain work bores us to death. A tiny tune, and then so much restatement, development, variation that we could rise in revolt. The tunes themselves are masterful, and rarely more than thirty-two bars long. All the rest is merely machine made music for the purpose of filling out an arbitrary form.

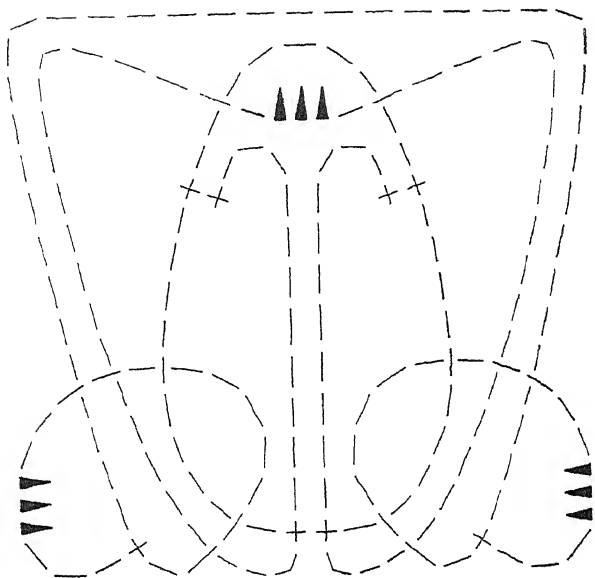
Had Brahms stuck to his songs and his piano pieces he would today be regarded as a much

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greater man. For music of the intellect soon is forgotten, and music written in response to the inward, vital and compelling force of genius remains a long time.

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## ON MUSIC CRITICISM

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"Criticism is the adventures of a soul among masterpieces."—Anatole France.

"The critic is like a carpenter who admires the workmanship of a chair without sitting in it."—Charles D. Isaacson.

"C'est mal."—The melancholy prince in Prokofyev's opera *The Love for Three Oranges*.

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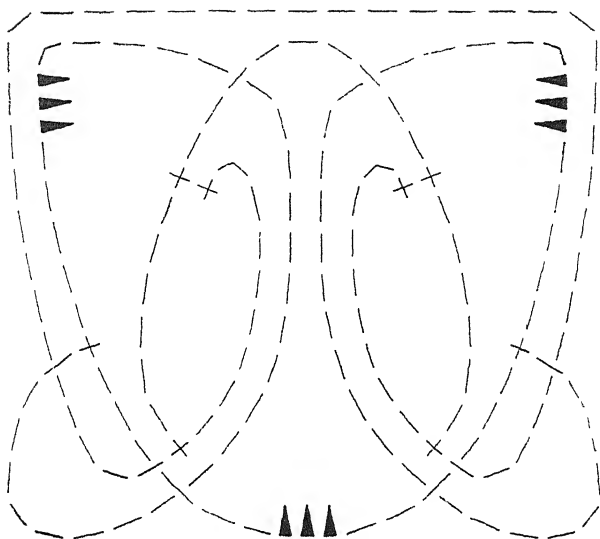




*Carl Van Vechten. A caricature by Miguel Covarrubias. By courtesy of Alfred A. Knopf.*

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## "MUSIC AFTER THE GREAT WAR"

[A REVIEW AFTER TEN YEARS]

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**I**N 1915 Mr. Carl Van Vechten published a book called *Music After the Great War*, in the first chapter of which, the title chapter, he predicts what music will be like after the war is over. Today this chapter makes interesting, if not astonishing, reading. For Van Vechten is unimpeachably right in his major premise, but falls

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far short in the lesser predictions. The conclusion is not that Mr. Van Vechten was a one-lung prophet (for he was an important and true prophet as far as he went), but rather that music history is just one damned thing after the other.

Says Van Vechten in his opening lines:

"Some say that music as an art ended with Richard Wagner's death. There are only a few, however, who do not include Brahms and Chaykovski in the list of those graced with the crown of genius. There are many who are generous enough to believe that Richard Strauss and Claude Debussy have carried on the divine torch. But there are only a few discerning enough to perceive that Stravinski and Schoenberg have gone only a step further than the so-called impressionists in music."

How strange this sounds to us, ten years after! With "The Fire Bird" and "Petrushka" on phonograph records, with the recent visit of Stravinski fresh in mind, with Schoenberg so often in our concert halls (but not enough in the concert halls of the west), it seems incredible that anyone should have had to defend these men.

Another of Van Vechten's statements in the beginning is this:

"Now, it should be apparent to anyone but the

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oldest inhabitant that the music dramas of Richard Wagner are aging rapidly. Public interest in them is on the decline, thanks to an absurd recognition, in some degree or other, everywhere from Bayreuth to Paris, from Madrid to New York, of what is known as the 'Master's tradition.' Some of this tradition has been invented by Frau Cosima Liszt von Buelow Wagner, and all of it is guaranteed to put the Wagner plays rapidly in a class with the operas of Donizetti and Bellini, stalking horses for prima donnas trained in a certain school."

This is foolish, and almost as absurd as Van Vechten's now notorious remark to the effect that chamber music was made for the pleasure of playing, not the pleasure of hearing. If the foregoing paragraph was not a conscious or unconscious pandering to the spirit of war hysteria that dragged the filth of international politics into the concert room and drove the Germans out of the opera house, then it was an outgrowth of bad taste. If the operas of Wagner are rapidly aging, then the symphonies of Beethoven are dead and buried, and the oratorios of Handel and the symphonies, operas and concert pieces of Mozart are museum relics. Hooray! Let us be modernists down to our toes. Let us not admit

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that any work of art over twenty years old is really Art.

Van Vechten is partly right about the Wagner tradition. The operas of Wagner will never, of course, be in a class with the works of Donizetti and Bellini, but observance to strict traditions puts a quietus on originality in interpretation. Still, if Appia could put Wagner on in the Ap-pian way, in Munich too, and come out of it alive there is hope that the Wagner traditions will some day pass away. I think they may die when Frau Cosima and Siegfried and the rest of the Wahnfried gang do. We are beginning to accept variations of all sorts in our Beethoven, and praise those who, beside giving us new interpretations of the works, actually add extra wind parts to them. When we have got as far away from Wagner as we are from Beethoven the traditions of Bayreuth will be no more.

Van Vechten surveys the musical field of 1915 and from that data makes his prophecy. Let us summarize his survey.

He begins with Germany, and justly finds Germany played out musically. Goldmark, Humperdinck, Pfitzner, Kienzl, Thuille, and Strauss are the biggest men he can find. Reger he does not consider a big man. None of these, he thinks, will

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contribute to ante-bellum music. Most of them, Strauss and Reger and Humperdinck, for examples, are musically dead.

He goes to Austria, and there finds two potent men, men whom he thinks will play a large part in music after the war. They are Erich Korngold and Arnold Schoenberg. Korngold was then only eighteen.

In France he finds many eminent has-beens, such as Dukas, Ravel, Satie, Debussy, d'Indy, Charpentier and Schmitt. None of these he thinks sufficiently young in ideas to contribute to music after the conflict.

Puccini and some other Italians Van Vechten dismisses. He finds Zandonai, however, an original force, and one which he thinks will do big things.

He expresses hope that Granados and Albeniz will do much in Spain.

Van Vechten dismisses Elgar, faintly praises Cyril Scott, and lumps Holbrooke, Delius, Grainger, Wallace and Bantock in one discarding sentence. (I rather disagree with him here. It was not Bantock's fault that he was not born in Samarcand. His Orientalism was good and tune-ful. He is dead now, so his contribution to post-war music can not have been much. Delius and

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Grainger were certainly worthy of more than mere mention. And can it be possible that Van Vechten had not heard of Williams? The latter's London symphony was written in 1912.)

In America he finds only such pale talents as those of Nevin, MacDowell, Hadley and Parker.

In Finland Van Vechten finds the hard, Northern genius of Sibelius, and hopes for contributions from him in the future.

He finally winds up in Russia, and concludes that from that country the ante-bellum musical genius will come. And yet he sees only one man on the horizon in Russia, Stravinski. He thinks Szymanowski of Poland will help some, but outside of Stravinski no pure Russian is mentioned by Van Vechten as a future creator of music.

When we look over the music of today we are struck at how true Van Vechten's negative conclusions were. None of the men he said would do nothing has done anything. On the other hand, men to whom he looked forward have done little. Many of those he mentioned are dead.

Now let us go once more over the map, *ala* the author of *Music After the Great War* and see just what the situation is today.

Germany is still musically played out. Strauss is still with us and still composing. Of late, so the

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papers tell us, he has written a concerto for a one-armed pianist. There are possibilities here, in writing music for physically disabled men. I know a one-eyed trombone player who could profit by the ministrations of Dr. Strauss.

But what is more important in connection with the music of Herr Doctor Richard is that what he wrote in the past is beginning to get bald. His "Hero's Life," we are beginning to see, is not a work in which he bares his soul, he merely uncovers his anatomy. "Zarathustra" sounds incoherent and feeble today. *Boris Godunov* with Shalyapin is a masterwork, and so is *Salome* with Mary Garden. But where Musorgski's opera without the star is still a masterwork, Strauss' without the leading actress is not.

As to the Austrians, Korngold and Schoenberg, the situation is much the same today as in 1915. Neither has repeated. I have heard the former's suite of tunes for "Midsummer Night's Dream" (really Mr. Stein, of *schoenste lengevitch* fame must do something with the German title of this, "*Viel Laermen um Nichts*") and it is nothing startling. I have not heard his opera, *The Dead City*, but it has been universally kicked around by every critic who knows what he is talking about. But Korngold is still very young.

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(I hope he didn't die during the war. I really don't know if he is alive or not.)

Debussy died three years after Van Vechten's book came out. It was impossible for anyone to follow in his footsteps. For where the music of a Borodin or Rimski-Korsakov springs from the common heredity and experience of a nation and hence is the legitimate source of a school, Debussy's music springs from the nervous system of one man and from nothing else. His is the art of sense impressions. An odor, a color, the feel of the wind were distilled thru his body into music. No one without a similar nervous makeup could follow him in creation of such music.

Now the other has-beens Van Vechten mentions, particularly d'Indy and Ravel, are peculiarly lively has-beens. It is a ticklish business, this, of saying a composer's work is done. I imagine they said the same thing of the latter day Rossini, and then he turned around and surprised them all with the "Stabat Mater," his best work, and *William Tell*, the overture to which is his most popular work.

But Satie is still alive, if not in his own work, then in that of the Six. For Auric and Poulenc, Milhaud and Honegger, are his artistic sons. I am not well enough acquainted with the works

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of Germain Taillefer to say anything about her. They are not a startlingly great lot, the Six, but they have cleverness. Milhaud will probably prove to be the biggest of them all. The prelude and fugue of his second orchestral suite has genius in it.

I confess I haven't the slightest idea who this man Zandonai may be. I have been fairly alive to contemporary music, but, not until I read Van Vechten did I hear of him. He may yet be doing something, so far as I know.<sup>1</sup>

But there is a large and flourishing Italian school of whom Van Vechten could know nothing in 1915. Casella, Respighi, Pich-Mangiagalli, Malipiero, and many others have come to the fore since the war. Casella is perhaps the most brilliant of these, but Respighi is the biggest. This last has been studying deeply the old liturgic music of Italy. And great and glorious use he will make of it, if his Gregorian concerto for violin is a foretaste of what is to come. There is real genius in his "Fountains of Rome."

Malipiero is an experimenter. Like Richard

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<sup>1</sup>After the above confession of abysmal ignorance was written Mr. Moore, then in Italy, reported having heard Zandonai's *Romeo and Juliet*, which he regards as a fairly hot opera.

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Strauss in his symphonic poems, he is writing music from his head. His works, such as "The Pauses of Silence" and the "Impressions of Nature" are laboratory pieces, made to see the effect of bizarre subject matter, and new harmonies and new instrumentation. Others may build on his foundations.

Granados died during the war, and that was a great tragedy. I do not care much for his "Dante" symphony, but I have read that his *Goyescas* is an opera of great beauty. But another composer has arisen in Spain. Manuel de Falla has come to us, not decked out like a Don Jose, but giving something of the real heart of Spain, which heart has a peculiar 6/8 rhythm. The bolero is in de Falla's blood. He must give us much.

Now as to America. No one could foresee the superjazz movement. I have dwelt on that at length elsewhere, so I merely mention it here. As for non-jazz music—it is a healthy sign that as the New Englanders die off their school dies with them. For the New Englanders wrote second-hand British music, and the Britishers in the main wrote second-hand German music.

It is also good that the cigar store Indian school of MacDowell, Busch and Cadman is not

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growing. That school had its root not in a real desire to preserve Indian music, but in a desire to sentimentalize it beyond endurance.

It is queer that two Bantocks should arise in this country, one in San Francisco and one in Pittsburgh. I am not too well acquainted with the Chinese music of Edgar Stillman Kelley, but if it is as good as the apparently authentic Orientalisms of Henry Eichheim it is real stuff.

Richard Washburn Child once propounded the question "Is there a Beethoven in Hoboken?" If there isn't one there I think there is one in Chicago. I hope I am not too myopically local when I speak of Leo Sowerby in these terms. In one page of "King Estmere" is more genius and inspiration than in all of Elgar.

The New York critics, particularly Rosenfeld, send us much news of one Edgar Varese, who is, apparently the apotheosis of impressionism, cubism, primitivism and all the rest of it in tone. Maybe so.

Van Vechten was right about Sibelius. But if he has done much since the war it has not crossed over this way. Alfven has painted the North in other terms. His is the spirit of Vermeer of Delft in music. All is light and color and joy in his work.

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There is an astonishing parallel between what is going on in present-day English music and the musical manifestations of Russia fifty years ago. The Russians had been dominated by the Germans, until Glinka pointed the way out, and Dargomijski and Balakirev led the exodus back to the musical soil of Russia.

So with the English. There is a great movement to go back to the English folk tune and build it up from that. In Williams, Goossens, Holst, Warlock and Ireland England speaks, not the halfbreed Germany that we hear in Elgar. And Bax brings us to Irish soil.

Before going to Russia there is one group that must be mentioned here. The Bohemians are beating the war drums loud and long for their composers. But we do not get to hear much modern Czecho-Slovakian music. The reason for this is that the modern Czecho-Slovakian school is quite young, and owes much to the intense nationalist feeling aroused in that new country by its liberation from Germany. Now it is almost law in musical affairs that a new composer or school of composers, especially a foreign composer or school, does not get a hearing in the concert room until he or it has been flayed or dissected or puffed in the magazines.

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Czecho-Slovakia has produced one Dvorak and one Smetana, and there are probably more Dvoraks and Smetanas, more symphonies and *Bartered Brides*, to be heard from.

Szymanowski, the Pole, has created a stir in New York. I am unacquainted with his work, and so can say nothing about him, but surely a composer who has caused enthusiasm such as Szymanowski has must have something to say.

And now as for Russia. Stravinski strides over the musical world of today, colossal, unrivalled, superb in his artistry. But there are other Russians, Prokofyev, author of the queerest fairy opera the world has yet heard, *The Love for Three Oranges*. It is a great pity that this work remains unheard, the scenery in storage in Chicago, the score in the library of the Chicago Civic Opera. It was a treat that Boris Anisfeld and Prokofyev gave us in the few performances the opera had. Maybe someday when Mr. Isaacson has delivered enough lectures in packing plants, and Mr. Johnson and Mr. Insull have enough cash on hand, *The Love for Three Oranges* will again be trotted out. Let us hope so.

Eminent has-beens there are in Russia. Glazunov and Gliere, and Ippolitov-Ivanov. Of these Gliere is the biggest. I think his is the big-

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gest genius of present-day music, next to Stravinski. How many times have you heard "The Sirens"? Do you not get the same thrill every time you hear the passage in the stopped horns signifying the approach of the ship to the fatal rock? If you are lucky enough to live in Chicago you will get the biggest thrill of your lifetime if you hear the "Ilya Mourometz" symphony, with its climax in organ and orchestra, like to nothing in the world. (That climax is partly Frederick Stock's doing. He wrote the organ part.)

Glazunov never was a big man. He was always a sort of super-Delibes, a writer of elegant ballets. Even in "Stenka Razin" he never forgets his polish long enough to be really human.

But of new music little has come out of Russia. Russia has gone through the greatest revolution in the history of the world. Whether economic conditions have prevented the Russians who live in Russia from composing (remember that Stravinski and Prokofyev do not live in their native country), or whether the anti-Russian blockade that has kept all but evil reports from reaching us has stopped the passage of new Russian music across I do not know. I heard some very beautiful songs in Europe, composed recently by a young Russian named Alexander

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Senschin. If musical composition in Russia keeps  
to the levels of Gliere, Stravinski, Prokofyev and  
this man Senschin in a very short time Russia will  
lead the world in the art of tone.  
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*Of this first edition of Syncopating Saxophones, Alfred Frankenstein's first book, 600 copies (of which 500 are for sale) were printed in Chicago in November, 1925. The book was designed (after the composition had been completed) by Vojtech Preissig in an attempt to show the possibility of typographic salvation through design under ordinary printing trade conditions. The type is Linotype Old Style. The dashes at the top and bottom of each page are Linotype dashes. The paper is Warren's Old Style. The composition was done by the Standard Typesetting Company of Chicago. The book was printed by Carbery & Reed and bound by Morris Spinner & Company of Chicago. This is the first Ballou book of Preissig design. The publisher hopes that it is the forerunner of many.*

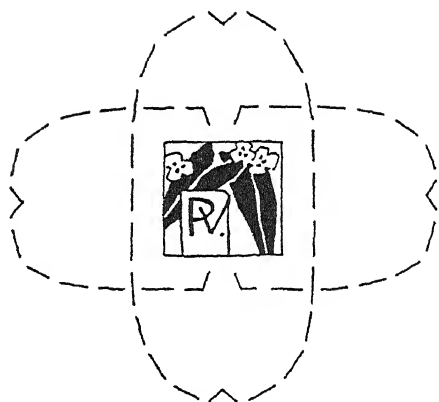
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